

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-12

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TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 217961

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PARM, SN, UR

SUBJECT:US-SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFER (CAT) TALKS,
BRIEFING

1. ON AUGUST 18, COUNSELLOR OF EMBASSY OF SINGAPORE PETER
CHAN WAS PROVIDED DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFING ON STATUS OF
US-SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT TALKS. THE FOLLOWING
OUTLINE OF POINTS RAISED IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR INFORMATION.
BEGIN TEXT.

A. BACKGROUND. THE U.S. AND SOVIETS HAVE MET THREE TIMES
TO DISCUSS CONVENTIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT. A SUBSTANTIVE
DIALOGUE REALLY BEGAN ONLY IN MAY, AFTER WHICH THE SIDES
ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH THEY AGREED (1) THAT THE
PROBLEM OF LIMITING ARMS TRANSFERS WAS URGENT AND (2) TO
HOLD REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS TO EXPLORE CONCRETE
MEASURES THAT COULD BE TAKEN.

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-- IN MAY THE SSOD ADOPTED A PROGRAM OF ACTION CALLING FOR
CONSULTATIONS AMONG SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS ON LIMITING
ARMS TRANSFERS. US-SOVIET BILATERAL MEETINGS REPRESENT AN
ATTEMPT TO BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT THAT UN MANDATE.

-- EVENTS IN LATIN AMERICA, SUCH AS THE JUNE 22 DECLARATION

BY THE EIGHT SIGNATORIES OF THE 1974 DECLARATION OF AYACUCHO CALLING FOR A LATIN AMERICAN AGREEMENT LIMITING CONVENTIONAL ARMS AND THE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS OF MEXICO TOWARD THE SAME END, ALSO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORK OF RESTRAINING ARMS TRANSFERS.

B. OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR RESTRAINT

THE U.S. OUTLINED A FRAMEWORK OF RESTRAINT TO THE SOVIETS, AS A WAY OF FOCUSING THE DELIBERATIONS. THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK CONSISTS OF THREE PARTS.

1. POLITICAL/LEGAL CRITERIA

-- THESE CRITERIA WOULD BE BASED ON THE UN CHARTER, UN RESOLUTIONS, AND OTHER INTERNATIONALLY AGREED DOCUMENTS.

-- THEY SHOULD SERVE TWO PURPOSES: (1) IDENTIFYING LEGAL CONSTRAINTS ON ARMS TRANSFERS; AND (2) IDENTIFYING RELEVANT POLITICAL FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN MAKING ARMS TRANSFER DECISIONS.

-- A GOOD BASIS EXISTS FOR THE ELABORATION OF MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE.

2. MILITARY/TECHNICAL CRITERIA

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-- COMMONLY AGREED MILITARY/TECHNICAL CRITERIA TO SET BOUNDARIES ON THE TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF WEAPONS TO BE PROVIDED.

-- THESE CRITERIA ARE EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS POLITICAL/LEGAL CRITERIA; AND AGREEMENT ON BOTH TYPES OF CRITERIA IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO HAVE A COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR RESTRAINT.

3. REGIONAL APPLICATION

-- ARRANGEMENTS TO APPLY CRITERIA IN REGIONAL CONTEXTS.

-- IT IS IMPORTANT TO GIVE SUBSTANCE TO CRITERIA THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE GENERAL AND ABSTRACT STATEMENTS OF INTEREST, SUBJECT TO MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS.

C. INTERIM RESTRAINT REGIME

-- BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT, IN ADVANCE OF FINAL AGREEMENT ON CRITERIA, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO REACH INTERIM RESTRAINT

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECIFIC REGIONS.

-- A BASIS WAS LAID THAT SUCH ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT CONSIST OF LISTS OF WEAPONS TO BE RESTRAINED.

-- BOTH SIDES AGREED IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS ANY REGION OR SUB-REGION OF THE WORLD, PROVIDED THEY WERE NOT ARTIFICIALLY CONTRIVED.

D. ROLE OF OTHER SUPPLIERS/RECIPIENTS

-- BOTH SIDES RECOGNIZED THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF OTHER SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS IN DEVELOPMENT.
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ING AND/OR SUPPORTING ANY RESTRAINT REGIME.

-- BOTH SIDES WERE HOPEFUL THAT OTHER SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS WOULD FIND IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO SUPPORT ARMS TRANSFER RESTRAINT.

-- WE HAVE MADE CLEAR TO THE SOVIETS OUR POSITION THAT THE LEGITIMATE DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS OF RECIPIENTS MUST BE MET.

E. ASSESSMENT OF ROUND III AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

-- THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE MOVEMENT TOWARD A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF GENERAL GUIDELINES OR CRITERIA FOR RESTRAINT IN ARMS TRANSFERS.

-- THE SOVIETS AGAIN APPEARED TO TAKE THESE DISCUSSIONS SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, THE NEXT ROUND -- TENTATIVELY PLANNED FOR DECEMBER TO ENABLE BOTH SIDES TO UNDERTAKE THOROUGH PREPARATIONS -- WILL PROVIDE A TEST OF THE PROSPECTS FOR NEAR-TERM SUCCESS OF CAT. END TEXT.

2. CHAN ASKED HOW THE U.S. WOULD DEFINE DESTABILIZING TRANSFERS. WE SAID THEORETICAL EXAMPLE WAS INTRODUCTION OF ADVANCED STRIKE AIRCRAFT INTO AREAS WHERE THEY DO NOT NOW EXIST. MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF ARMS WERE ALSO DESTABILIZING. HE QUERIED WHETHER EFFECT OF TALKS WOULD BE TO ESTABLISH A THRESHOLD OF SOPHISTICATED HARDWARE FOR LDC'S. HE WAS TOLD THAT OUR PRESENT POLICY DOES NOT ALLOW US TO BE THE FIRST TO BREAK EXISTING THRESHOLDS. ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY OVER THE YEARS WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE UPDATING STANDARDS. AS TO WHAT THE IMPLICATIONS WERE OF THE TALKS FOR SINGAPORE, IT WAS INDICATED THAT SINCE USG ALREADY HAD A POLICY OF UNILATERAL RESTRAINT, THE IMPACT OF THE
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TALKS, IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD BE TO INVOLVE OTHERS IN
RESTRAINT AS WELL. CHAN WAS TOLD THAT THE NEXT ROUND OF

TALKS WAS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER, AND THAT
THUS FAR THE SOVIETS HAD SHOWN A SERIOUS AND BUSINESSLIKE
ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ISSUES. CHAN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION
FOR BRIEFING. CHRISTOPHER

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